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Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens Awarded \$650,000 by Initiative Funded by Ford Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Pilot House Philanthropy and Alice L. Walton Foundation

Grant to Fund a New Curatorial Position Named in Honor of Visionary Arts and Education Leader and Jacksonville Native Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole

May 4, 2023—JACKSONVILLE, Fla.—The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens announced today that it has been awarded a \$650,000 grant from the Leadership in Art Museums (LAM) initiative, a partnership between the Ford Foundation, Mellon Foundation, Pilot House Philanthropy and Alice L. Walton Foundation. The funding provided by LAM enables the Cummer Museum to establish the Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole Curator, a new position named in honor of the Jacksonville native and internationally regarded educator, scholar and transformational leader.

More than 60 years ago, Ninah Cummer created the Cummer Museum to serve as an educational and civic resource for the people of Jacksonville. The Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole Curator will work collaboratively with museum leadership and colleagues on the development of exhibitions, educational initiatives, public programming and acquisitions that build upon Cummer’s vision of engaging all of the people who live, work in and visit Jacksonville. The funding will also support the Cummer’s and LAM’s shared goals of advancing professional development in the museum field in ways that are representative of both the city and the nation.

“Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole has always considered the Cummer Museum her hometown museum. The curatorship named in her honor will help us advance Ninah Cummer’s vision of being a ‘center of beauty and culture for all,’” said Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, Ph.D., George W. and Kathleen I. Gibbs Director and CEO. “This grant is an enormous vote of confidence that we are on the right course to expand and diversify our audiences, welcoming more visitors to explore and engage with our collections, gardens and programs.”

“Ultimately, the future of museums depends on their ability to stay relevant and serve their communities,” said Alice Walton, philanthropist and founder of Alice L. Walton Foundation. “The LAM

museums represent a variety of regions across the U.S. and help ensure that we're increasing access to museum roles in a way that's inclusive of communities of color, no matter where the art institution is based. With this dedicated group of funding partners, we're united in our commitment to achieve long-lasting impact."

"The arts play an essential role in our society by inspiring people of all ages to dream and imagine new possibilities for themselves, their communities and the world," said Darren Walker, president of the Ford Foundation. "Leadership in Art Museums' vision to grow and invest in diverse leadership at U.S. art museums is more critical than ever. If we want the arts in this country to stay vibrant, moving and transformational, it's imperative that these institutions bring in more diverse perspectives and lived experiences."

"It is an extraordinary honor and a joy to have my name associated with this new curatorial position at the Cummer Museum. I am witnessing this institution emerge into a beacon where the stories of all of the world's people are told," said Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole. "Imagine how much further we will go as this curator builds upon the Museum's momentum, values its legacy and facilitates opportunities to expand the vast stories that art tells."

The Cummer is one of only 19 museums across the country selected to receive a LAM grant through a competitive and thorough selection process. The LAM grants are designated for creating and sustaining new leadership positions that are inclusive of communities of color.

In addition to the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, the other 2023 LAM grant recipients include:

Arizona State University Art Museum, Phoenix, Arizona
The Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston, Massachusetts
Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo, Michigan
MASS MoCA, North Adams, Massachusetts
McNay Art Museum, San Antonio, Texas
Mississippi Museum of Art, Jackson, Mississippi
Museum of the City of New York, New York, New York
Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Illinois
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
The Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City, Missouri
The Newark Museum of Art, Newark, New Jersey
Oakland Museum of California, Oakland, California
Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, Massachusetts
Pérez Art Museum Miami, Florida
Portland Art Museum, Portland, Oregon
Riverside Art Museum, Riverside, California
Saint Louis Art Museum, St. Louis, Missouri
Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience, Seattle, Washington

About Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole

Dr. Johnnetta Betsch Cole served as Director of the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of African Art from 2009-2017. Prior to that, she was the first African American woman appointed

President of Spelman College in Atlanta and, subsequently, President of Bennett College in Greensboro, NC.

Earlier this year, President Biden awarded Dr. Cole a National Humanities Medal which “honors individuals or groups whose work has deepened the nation's understanding of the humanities and broadened our citizens' engagement with history, literature, languages, philosophy and other humanities subjects.” She has received 72 honorary degrees and numerous accolades in recognition of her incredible array of achievements and contributions.

Dr. Cole was the first woman elected to the board of Coca-Cola Enterprises and also served on the boards of Merck and Home Depot. She was the first African American to Chair the board of United Way of America. She was a founding board member of the Points of Light Foundation and served on the Advisory Committee of America’s Promise. Dr. Cole currently serves on the Board of the A. L. Lewis Museum in The Historic American Beach Community. And she is a senior DEAI Fellow with the American Alliance of Museums.

Dr. Cole attended Fisk University and Oberlin College and subsequently earned master’s and doctorate degrees from Northwestern University. She has also held teaching positions at Washington State University, University of Massachusetts at Amherst and Hunter College. Dr. Cole is a Jacksonville native who now lives 40 miles north of Jacksonville in The Historic American Beach Community.

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About the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens

For more than 60 years, the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens has been committed to engaging and inspiring through the arts, gardens, and education. A permanent collection of more than 5,000 objects and historically significant gardens on a riverfront campus offers nearly 140,000 annual visitors a truly unique experience on the First Coast. Nationally recognized education programs serve adults and children of all abilities. The Museum is committed to ensuring that diversity and inclusion are woven into the fabric of its exhibitions, programs, and offerings. For further information, including hours, visit www.cummuseum.org.